



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 5900, AN ACT REQUIRING
MORE TRANSPARENCY IN EDUCATION BY JOHN P. MURPHY
ON BEHALF OF THE CONNECTICUT CITIZEN ACTION GROUP
AND INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL
WORKERS LOCAL 1228 – FEBRUARY 22, 2013

Good afternoon, Senators Musto and McLachlan; Representatives Jutila and Hwang; members of the committee. My name is John Murphy and I am here to testify in favor of **HB 5900, An Act Requiring More Transparency In Education** on behalf of over 20,000 member families of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1228.

CCAG has fought long and hard for the past 42 years for open and honest government that is accountable to the public. HB 5900 is necessary to understand how the State Department of Education (DOE) and the State Education Resource Center (SERC) are spending our tax dollars on education consultants, as well as grant dollars received from private investors seeking to make a profit from educating our students.

The alleged lack of clarity of SERC's structure and legal status led to no-bid contracts being awarded by SERC to education consultants of at least \$600,000 or more in the last 16 months. Among the contracted out policy initiatives included the state's federal waiver application for No Child Left Behind and Governor Malloy's education reform proposal presented to the General Assembly.

Why were such major policy initiatives not contracted out by DOE but instead by SERC? The answer is simple; the choice to run those and other private contracts through SERC was because it was exempt from Connecticut's clean contracting law. If DOE had taken these tasks on themselves, they would have had to comply with the laws and procurement policies we fought so hard for in response to botched construction projects, illegal campaign donations and widespread corruption.

First, DOE would have had to conduct a cost-benefit analysis to determine if it was more cost effective to contract the work to outside vendors rather than DOE employees. The bidding process requires an RFP soliciting bids; potential vendors would have had to submit sealed bids

with their proposals. Instead of this open and transparent process, the DOE had SERC issue no-bid contracts to preferred private vendors with political connections, circumventing our fair contracting laws.

HB 5900 would require the State Education Resource Center and all regional educational service centers to comply with state procurement and contracting laws. In addition, it would require the Commissioner of Education to report

- (1) All contracts issued;
- (2) The amounts and sources of private funding received
- (3) The amounts used to pay the salary, fringe benefits and compensation for any employee or consultant.

Yesterday, the State Auditors issued a report that examined SERC, and stated "SERC has not acted in a manner that is consistent with state agency requirements for transparency and accountability. We continue to be concerned about the lack of a clear legal status for SERC. The absence of this structure greatly undermines the ability of SERC to be transparent and accountable to the people of Connecticut."

In closing, Connecticut's residents demand openness, transparency and accountability in their state government. Please vote for HB 5900 to bring fair contracting standards to all government entities. Thank you.